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GENERAL NOTES.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL.¹

ASIA, ETC.—SUANETIA.—The first article in the June issue of the *Proceedings* Royal Geographical Society is that of Mr. Douglas Freshfield upon Suanetia, which is the Anglicized name of the upper basin of the Ingur, a small river which flows into the Black Sea a few miles east of Sukhum Kaleh. The valley is about forty miles long by twenty wide, and lies between three and four thousand feet above the sea. On its north lie the complicated ridges of the crest of the Caucasus, with such summits as Tetnuld (15,947 feet), Koshtan-tau (17,036 feet), and Ushba. These ridges are composed of crystalline rocks, which show the tendency observable in the Alps to arrange their summits in double lines, in the troughs between which lie vast névés. The great glacier basins thus enclosed are named the Zanner, Thuber, Gvalda, and Betsho. These glaciers send down to the Ingur or its tributaries many ice-streams, such as the Adish, which in the Alps would rank as a first-class glacier. On either flank of the rigid granites lie beds of friable schists, whose summits present green rounded outlines, and exhibit a striking contrast to the snowy precipices of the great chain. South of Suanetia rises the lofty slate ridge of the Leila, which runs parallel to the main chain, and attains elevations of 12,000 feet. At its western end this ridge bears some considerable glaciers. The river escapes from the valley at its western end, between high spurs of the two chains, and through a narrow porphyritic gorge not at present passable for horses. To the east the valley of Suanetia terminates in a low grassy down (8,600 feet), only 1,600 feet above the highest villages, and beyond this lies a pathless waste of forests and flowers—the wilderness in which rises the Skenes Skali, a tributary of the Rion (the ancient Phasis). But this outlet is so circuitous that both Russians and natives have preferred the higher and steeper Latpari Pass (9,200 feet), which is the usual route into the valley.

The natives of this secluded spot are first mentioned by Strabo under the name of Soani, and the received text credits them with 200,000 fighting men. Strabo says that the king had a council of 300, and that the tribe used poisoned arrows in war. Whatever the former strength of the nation, the Suaneti, as they now call themselves, did not number more than 12,000 at the last census.

¹ Edited by W. N. Lockington, Philadelphia, Pa.

Over one-third of these live on the upper Skenes Skali, and are more or less merged with the surrounding Mingrelian populations. The Suanetians are not in the odor of sanctity. At best they are sheep-stealers and cattle-lifters. They were converted to Christianity before the tenth century, but may now be fairly described as reverted pagans. Seven hundred years ago Suanetia formed part of the kingdom of the famous Georgian Queen Tamara, in whose honor the Suanetians still chant ballads. For awhile it was connected with Mingrelia, but at some time in the last century it became entirely unattached, and the upper part of the Ingur valley still bears the name of Free Suanetia. The country is covered with small chapels, dating probably from the 11th and 12th centuries, but these are no longer used as churches, but as treasure-houses. Long before Suanetia had obtained home rule, it had disestablished its church. An hereditary caste of local elders took the place of the priests, and a village vestry assumed the control of the ecclesiastical property and kept the keys of the church, which contain many curious and some beautiful works of art. Services and sacraments followed the priests. Marriage consisted in sewing together the garments of the bride and bridegroom, and the ancient funeral ceremonies were revived. There are traces of tree-worship and also of that of the heavenly bodies. The natural tendency of the population to increase beyond the supporting powers of the territory was effectually checked by placing a pinch of ashes in the mouth of every superfluous female baby. Russia assumed suzerainty over this district in 1833, and has gradually tightened her sway, appointing headmen or *starchinas* in every commune, and establishing several schools, as well as placing its representative at Betsho in a position to command some respect and obedience. The Suaneti are rather a farming than a pastoral people, though they keep a few flocks of sheep and herds of horses. There does not seem to be a prevalent type among the people. There are fair men with tawny beards, dark men, men that look like Persians and men that resemble figures from an Assyrian monument. The criminal refugees that have for centuries found a sure retreat in this mountain Alsatia have so obscured the traces of the original stock that it is difficult to tell whether that stock was Georgian or Colchian. Mr. Freshfield, on account of the resemblance of the Suanetian tongue to the Early Georgian, accepts the former view.

The architecture of the Suanetian villages is striking. Towers and castles abound. Mestia has seventy towers forty to seventy feet high; Ushkul about fifty and two castles. The towers, constructed for defence, are of untrimmed black slate, and are attached to houses built of the same material.

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.—The Solomons lie about five hundred miles east of New Guinea, and extend for six hundred miles north-west and southeast, between the meridians of 154° and 163° E. longitude, and the parallels of 5° and 11° S. latitude. They were discovered and named by the Spaniard Mendana, in 1567. There are seven principal islands (Bougainville, Choiseul, Ysabel, Malayta, San Christoval, Guadalcanar, New Georgia) and several smaller ones. The total area of the group is estimated by Mr. C. M. Woodford, who has recently returned from a lengthened residence among them, at 15,000 square miles, but they may still be considered as to a great extent unknown. Dr. Guppy, who has recently written a valuable work entitled "The Solomon Islands; their Geology, general Features, and suitability for Colonization" was attached to a man-of-war, but Mr. Woodford resided among the natives, engaged in collecting birds, mammals, etc., and was thus exposed to many dangers among a people who are given to head-hunting and cannibalism. The island of Savo was an active volcano when discovered in 1567, and at the present time has hot springs, which also occur upon Simbo and Vella Lavella, while Kulambangara is an extinct volcano. There is an active volcano near the centre of Bougainville. On this island, which is the largest and most northerly of the group, the mountains rise to a height of 10,000 feet, on Guadalcanar to 8,000 feet, and on the other large islands to from three to five thousand feet. The islands are mostly clothed with dense tropical forest from the coast to the mountain tops. Records kept by traders at Ugi and Santa Anna show that the annual rainfall is from 100 to 150 inches per annum. Mr. Woodford stayed awhile upon the islands of Alu, Fauro, New Georgia and Guadalcanar, on the last of which he lived half a year. Here he explored the rivers Aola and Kobua, and got a bearing of the peak Vatapusau (4,360 feet).

The natives are mostly of the Papuan type, with some admixture of the lighter Polynesian. The men wear no clothes save the T bandage so common among savage races, and many do not even wear this. On San Christoval and Malayta the women have a plaited square of grass fibre about six inches by four suspended round the waist, but some go absolutely naked. On Guadalcanar the females are invested in a series of superposed fringes. Many of the natives pierce the lobe of the ear, and enlarge the opening till it attains a diameter of two inches or more. The canoes vary in size from one just large enough to carry a boy of twelve to the great head-hunting canoes, capable of carrying fifty or sixty men. They are adzed down from the solid tree, sewn together with a tough vegetable fibre, and caulked with a putty scraped from the kernel of the nut of *Parinarium laurinum*. The use of stone implements seems to have gone out, except perhaps on Bougainville,

a plane-iron being now employed to serve as the blade of an adze. On Savu the megapode or mound-builder lays its eggs upon two sandy patches of open ground, and nowhere else on the island. These laying-grounds are fenced off into small divisions for various owners. In New Georgia and the adjacent smaller islands the passion for head-hunting is such that no canoe can be launched without a head being obtained. The chief hunting grounds are the large islands of Choiseul and Ysabel, which have been nearly depopulated by the practice.

GODWIN-AUSTEN PEAK.—The second highest mountain known to exist on the earth's surface is as yet unnamed, unless the letters K^2 , by which it was characterized by the surveyors who discovered and fixed its position nearly thirty years ago, can be called a name. Attention to this unnamed and unknown condition of the second mightiest elevation of the world, 28,250 feet above the sea-level, was called through the reading of Lieutenant Younghusband's account of his adventurous passage over the Mustakh Pass on his way from China to India. General J. T. Walker (late Surveyor-General of India), has proposed that the peak be named Godwin-Austen, after the first surveyor of the Mustakh ranges and glaciers, and the proposition received the assent of the meeting of the Royal Geographical Society.

A route practicable for road or rail has been found from Assam to Upper Burma, across a belt of dense tree jungle and mountain, which lies between the last British station in Assam and the summit of the Patkoi range.

AFRICA.—THE CAMEROONS.—M. Valdau, a Swedish colonist of the Cameroons, explored the northern slopes of the range in the early part of 1887, and found that the main chain does not extend as far as $4^{\circ}30'$ N. Latitude, since the highest point attained by him, about $4^{\circ}28'$ N. Latitude, only measured 2,850 feet. M. Knutson, another Swede, in July last discovered the mouth of the river Memeh, which had previously been supposed either to be a tributary of the Rio del Rey, or of the Rumbi. Its embouchure is a little to the south of that of the Rumbi. M. Knutson ascended the river, which he found to be navigable for about thirty miles, as far as the Düben Falls, 100 feet in height.

SENEGAMBIA.—French explorers and surveyors have been busy in Senegambia. The country of Bondu, hitherto known only from the itineraries of Mungo Park and others, has been thoroughly surveyed by M. Fortin and Leforte; and the district of Bambuk, which two years ago was the least known part of French Sudan,

has been completely surveyed by a large party of officers. This region occupies the territory between the Faleme, Senegal, Bafing, and the country of Konkadugu, but its population is only 20,000. The divide between the Senegal and the Gambia was explored by the military columns which operated against the Marabout Mahmadu Lamine. It consists of undulating plains of small elevation, with stony patches at intervals, and contains five small confederated states, with a population of about 13,000. South of Bambuk Captain Oberdorf has explored the Upper Gambia to 12° S. Latitude, and also the upper courses of the Faleme and the Bafing, two important tributaries of the Senegal. Existing maps, especially as regards the Faleme, will have to be considerably altered. This river does not rise in the plateau of Timbo, but in the Koy Mountains. The Tene, hitherto regarded as the upper course of the Faleme, is an affluent of the Bafing. The large tributaries of the Senegal have some fine open reaches, but their navigability is prevented by frequent rapids and falls. Captain Oberdorf concluded treaties with all the tribes visited, save those of Koy. Lieutenant Reichemberg visited Konkadugu, Bafe, Solu, and the left bank of the Bafing. Valuable auriferous bearings are reported from the first of these districts. Captain Peroz, whose mission was directed southeast of that of Captain Oberdorf, surveyed the valley of the Milo as far as Bissandugu, and also the Bure and Upper Bafing, but the chief result of his efforts was the conclusion of a treaty with Almany Samory, by means of which the French possessions are extended to the banks of the Niger and the Tankisso, and the French protectorate to the confines of Liberia. Lieutenant Quinquandon and Dr. Tautain, who were sent to visit Great Beledugu and the left bank of the Niger, visited Murdia, Gumba, Segala, and Sokoto, and report that the soil becomes less and less fertile towards the northeast, where the country is analogous to Southern Algeria.

EUROPE.—THREE DAYS ON THE SUMMIT OF MONT BLANC.—A party of French meteorologists spent three days of July, 1887, on the summit of Mont Blanc. They were accompanied in the ascent by twenty-four bearers, of whom all but two deposited their burdens upon the summit and immediately departed. In the ascent of the last hill, M. M. Vallot and Richard were attacked by mountain sickness and did not recover for several hours. In a small indentation between the dome of the summit and the ridge by which it is reached the observers pitched their tent. During the first night M. Vallot attempted to fix the instruments, but was driven back by the wind and snow. During the next day he was more successful. While on the summit the health of the party was not very good, yet numerous physiological and meteorological observations were made. On July 30th a terrible thunder storm raged around them for several hours.

THE GERMAN POPULATION.—M. Ch. Grad (*Revue Scientifique*, April 14th, 1888), gives the number of German-speaking people within Germany itself at 41,512,000, and the entire German-speaking population of Europe at 60,000,000. To make up this total we have 8,000,000 in Austro-Hungary, 1,900,000 Swiss, 860,000 Russian Germans (625,000 of whom are Jews), 4,270,000 Hollanders and Luxemburgers, 3,400,000 Flemings (300,000 of whom are in France), and 30,000 Germans resident in Belgium. The number of Germans in Europe has doubled since 1820, in spite of the emigration. The 3,722,000 non-German speaking individuals enumerated at the last census by no means represents the actual extent of the Slavic element, since the whole course of the history in the provinces east of the Elbe has been one of Germanization of an originally Slavic population.

THORODDSEN'S EXPLORATIONS IN ICELAND.—M. Thoroddsen has contributed to Petermann's *Mittheilungen* an account of his exploration of the northwestern peninsula of Iceland in 1886. This part of Iceland forms a table land, averaging rather more than 2,000 feet in height and broken up by fjords the sides of which are almost perpendicular. Nearly every fjord has distinct terraces representing ancient coast lines, now high above the sea. Banks of shells identical with those now living in the sea, and skeletons of whale and walrus have been discovered in these terraces. The Glamujökull glacier, which once measured 120 square miles, has shrunk to half its former size, while one of the glaciers of the Drangajökull has also shrunk from sixty to thirty square miles. From measurements made from the end of the Reykjarfjord glacier, the traveler found that it had retreated 1,600 yards during the last fifty years. From Furuffjord to the North Cape the coast is formed by a stretch of basaltic rock, 1,300 to 1,600 feet high, traversed by deeply eroded grassy valleys, some of which are inhabited. The dwellers in these valleys live principally by catching sea birds. The Horn Mountain (North Cape), is the highest resting-place in Iceland.

A DISCOVERY IN THE ARCTIC OCEAN.—According to the organ of the Geographical Society of Stockholm, Captain Johannesen last summer succeeded in reaching an island, situated to the east of Spitzbergen, in 80°10' N. Latitude, and 32°3' E. Longitude. This island is a table-land rising to 2,100 feet, and is supposed to be the same as Hvide O, seen by Captain Kjeldsen, and also by Captain Sorensen on August 28th, 1884. This discovery confirms the existence of an archipelago extending from Spitzbergen to Franz Josef Land, preventing the ice from descending into the Barents Sea, and thus having a great influence over the climate of Europe.